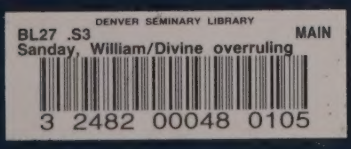
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1920

TO MY COLLEAGUES AT CHRIST CHURCH WHO
IN SOMEWHAT DELICATE CIRCUMSTANCES
HAVE ALWAYS BEEN THE KINDEST
OF FRIENDS TO ME

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PREFACE

THIS book, such as it is, contains my last public utterances as Lady Margaret Professor. When I had no longer any doubt that the time had come when I ought to retire, I planned a short course of lectures which might perhaps be suitable to mark the close of the tenure of the chair as an Inaugural marks its beginning. It happened that I was also called upon to preach before the University in the regular course; and I have ventured to print this sermon along with the lectures. The four chapters which are thus formed were not exactly designed in the first instance as a continuous series. And yet, apart from the fact that they were all written at the same time, there is a real thread of connexion between them. I have tried to express this in the common title under which I have grouped them. The underlying thought is that not only the field of what we call special revelation but the whole process of religious evolution must be included in one great divine scheme, which has its human side of progressive experiment, but has

no less its divine side in which all the scattered imperfect and fluctuating efforts of man are co-ordinated into a single continuous and comprehensive whole, with subtle invisible links between its various parts and stages. The third lecture develops (in a form which is partly apologetic) the point that it is a mistake to suppose that this divine element involves anything that is really arbitrary or irregular. The sermon may be taken to illustrate an application of the general idea in its bearing upon modern problems. It is reprinted here by kind permission of the editor of *The Expositor*. The frontispiece is from Erman's *Ägyptische Religion* (1905), p. 71.

W. SANDAY.

CHRIST CHURCH,
OXFORD.

I

THE PLACE OF COMPARATIVE RELIGION IN THEOLOGICAL STUDY

I

THE PLACE OF COMPARATIVE RELIGION IN THEOLOGICAL STUDY[1]

THE publication of Sir James G. Frazer's *Folk-Lore in the Old Testament* (Macmillan, 1918) may be said to form something of a landmark in the history of theological study. We might call it perhaps the Coming of Age of that particular branch of the Theological Encyclopaedia which goes by the name of 'Comparative Religion'.

Sir James Frazer is the leading representative among us of the literary study of Anthropology. He is a scholar and a man of letters; and he has planned his work upon a large scale. He is not merely a collector of facts, but he marks that mature stage at which the collecting and digesting of facts has been reduced to a work of art. The three volumes of his latest undertaking amount to a *corpus* of materials on that side of Anthropology which brings it into the closest contact with Theology.

When I speak of a *corpus* of material, I do not mean exactly to suggest that it is to be taken as authoritative, because there is a good deal in it that should rather be regarded as tentative; nor can I by

[1] This lecture was originally entitled 'Suggestions for a New Orientation of Theological Study'.

any means wholly admire the attitude to the subject which it represents. The great desideratum seems to me to be a closer study and definition of the relations in which the different data stand to each other, distinguishing those in which there is a real connexion and affiliation from those in which there is only a vague analogy. It is chiefly as a record of progress that the book is impressive.

I

I wish I could give an idea how impressive. I shall not try to pile up details, and will confine myself for the most part to what has been done in these islands. But even within these limits it may be possible, by turning the facts about a little and looking at them in different lights, to convey some impression of the magnitude and rapidity of the advance that has been made in the last few years.

(1) Let us think, first, of the amount of this comparative matter that has found its way into commentaries on the early books of the Bible. I believe Dr. Driver was the first to bring to bear systematically parallels to the early chapters of Genesis from the Assyrian and Babylonian records.[1] This was in his commentary on Genesis, which came out in 1904. Then Dr. Skinner, Principal of Westminster College, Cambridge, has followed in his steps in his com-

[1] This is said strictly of *commentaries*. The first work to deal directly with the subject was, I believe, the second edition of Eberhard Schrader's *Keilinschriften u. d. A.T.* (E.T. 1886).

mentary on the same book with eminent sobriety and sound judgement. This appeared in 1912. And then only yesterday Dr. Burney placed in our hands a commentary on Judges that hardly leaves a stone unturned in the way of all-round research and illustration.

(2) Another test that can be applied is the test of the Schweich Lectures. Here again we begin with Dr. Driver and end with Dr. Burney. In 1908 Dr. Driver opened the series by a survey of *Modern Research as Illustrating the Bible.* But in this connexion we are reminded of the special debt that is due to Dr. Leonard W. King of the British Museum. As, from our present point of view, the Book of Genesis is the most important in the Bible, so the double department of Egyptian and Assyrian Antiquities has taken the lead in the field of research by excavation. And just in this field the strides in advance have been greatest. It is Dr. King more than any one else who has enabled us to keep pace with them. Of late the new material has come mainly from America, with the utilizing of the finds brought by the expedition of the University of Pennsylvania from the site of the ancient city of Nippur. The mention of these recalls the debt we are under to Dr. Morris Jastrow, Jr., whose books are so clear, so readable, and so aptly and copiously illustrated. I have in mind more particularly his *Aspects of Religious Belief in Babylonia and Assyria* (1911), and *Civilization of Babylonia and Assyria* (1915). The new texts were published especially by Dr. Arno Poebel in 1914. But in this country no one has done

more to bring home the significance of these discoveries than Dr. Leonard W. King. We have only to follow his publications to see them as it were rising before our eyes. First there was the history of *Sumer and Akkad* (1910); then of *Babylonia* (1915); and now, at the high-water mark of the subject, his Schweich Lectures on *Legends of Babylon and Egypt*, delivered in 1916 and published last year.

I wonder how far the extraordinary gains that have been marked by these researches have sunk into the general consciousness. We only have to compare the state of the data in respect to fullness and precision as they stood at the time of the publication of *Sumer and Akkad*, then five years later with *Babylonia*, and as they now stand in the Schweich Lectures. Is it quite realized that behind the Neo-Babylonian and Assyrian cultures there lie not only the culture of ancient Babylonia but the yet older civilization that is known as Sumerian? For a time this was disputed; but it is now firmly established. In the first place, the first Babylonian dynasty is now fixed with approximate exactness at the period 2225–1926, the great Hammurabi and his Code of Law occupying the years 2123–2081. Whereas, quite recently, we had a number of texts in Assyrian copies of the time of Ashur-banipal (the Greek Sardanapalus, 668–626), not only have we these texts carried back to the times of the Babylonian Hammurabi, but we also have them carried back still further into the Sumerian period, i. e. across the border of the fourth millennium B.C.

In like manner as regards Egypt. I understand that the Palermo Stele is one of the earliest monuments of Egyptian history. It appears to have been drawn up during the Vth Dynasty, i.e. before the middle of the third millennium B.C. I gather that it can be inferred from this that from the beginning of the dynastic age onward a sort of yearly chronicle was kept of the leading acts of the reigning Pharaoh.[1] The beginning of the 'dynastic age' is placed by Dr. James H. Breasted, a trustworthy American scholar, about 3400. Dr. King tells us that five other fragments of the text of the Stele have now been published, which in the circumstances must be a discovery of great importance. Dr. King says that 'we can now trace the history of culture in the Nile Valley back, through an unbroken sequence, to its neolithic stage'.[2] Both the history of Egypt and the history of Babylonia are now very substantial quantities well on in the fourth millennium B.C. Does not that impress the imagination?

(3) But a still more effective way of bringing out the progress of knowledge is to take to pieces a book like Sir James Frazer's and resolve it into its component parts. It will give an additional zest to this if I point out by the way how much has been due to men of our own race, and how characteristic their several contributions have been. The whole development has fallen well within the last fifty years. I have been witness of it myself. The landmarks are as follows.

(i) In 1871 Sir E. B. Tylor brought out his book

[1] *Schweich Lectures*, p. 23. [2] Ibid., p. 22.

Primitive Culture, which struck out a new line. Sir Edward Tylor (knighted in 1912) was an English country squire, of Quaker family, fond of travel and interested in primitive peoples, to whose manners and customs he devoted a great amout of sagacious study and observation. Lord Avebury (Sir John Lubbock), whose name was often mentioned along with his, was not quite a writer of the same calibre. But Andrew Lang, as a man of letters and so far also an amateur, gave efficient support and broke a doughty lance against Max Müller and his following, who were inclined to exaggerate the part played by mythology in the early history of Religion and to treat mythology too much as just a disease of language.

(ii) Very different were the antecedents of William Robertson Smith. We may well ask if there was any greater academic figure in the last generation. There was none that had so much to do with scientific theology. His personal presence and magnetism fructified the leading minds in two universities; and yet it is a happy thing that bodily presence is not needed to transmit an influence. We too had our *par nobile*—in Dr. Cheyne and Dr. Driver, great scholars both; one a genius as well as a scholar, and the other endowed with judgement equal to his scholarship. Robertson Smith's great work was done between 1875 and 1888 while he was engaged on *The Encyclopaedia Britannica*, with that epoch-making book *The Religion of the Semites* added in 1889. And it was Dr. Cheyne who stepped into his inheritance with *Encyclopaedia Biblica* (1899–1903).

(iii) It cannot be said that Professor Max Müller was on the winning side in the more fundamental controversies in which he engaged. His theories did not take hold, in spite of the attractive form in which they were put forward.

And yet he left behind him one great achievement. It is to him that we owe the initiative of the great series of *Sacred Books of the East*, which is now complete in fifty volumes. The first volume, I believe, appeared in 1875, the same date at which Robertson Smith was beginning his work on *The Encyclopaedia Britannica*. The undertaking was international; it owed its inception to the enthusiasm of Prof. Max Müller, and its organization to the enterprise of the Clarendon Press.

(iv) I observe that Sir James Frazer sketches the genealogy of his own studies in his new preface. He traces them to the French Protestant Pastor Samuel Bochart (1599–1667), and in England a little later to Dr. John Spencer (1630–95), Master of Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, who laid the foundations of the science of Comparative Religion by his book on the ritual laws of the ancient Hebrews. After a lapse of two centuries this work was taken up again in Cambridge by William Robertson Smith, of whom Sir James speaks as his own 'revered master and friend'. It is his ambition to tread in the footsteps of these predecessors, and to carry on what he asks leave to call 'the Cambridge tradition of Comparative Religion'.

The claim made for Cambridge is perfectly just. At the same time I am not sorry to think that at the

present moment, in spite of our severe losses in the too early deaths of Dr. Cheyne and Dr. Driver, our own Hebraists and Anthropologists are well able to hold their own, and we too have a tradition in our Pitt Rivers Museum.

(v) On another side we can reach out a hand to Sir James Frazer. He might indeed seem to be following Sir E. B. Tylor, when I imagine that he is really treading in the footsteps of Robertson Smith. The work with which he made his own great reputation was *The Golden Bough*, which appeared in 1890. The more special field to which this belongs was the field of Classical Archaeology, to which he has also contributed his sumptuous edition of Pausanias. In this field he is joined by Dr. Percy Gardner and the Rector of Exeter (Dr. Farnell) whose *Cults of the Greek States* came out in five stately volumes in the years 1896–1909. And what these scholars have done for Greece, Mr. Warde Fowler has done in equally finished and thorough style for Rome.

(vi) I have already said that, from the Biblical—Old Testament—point of view, the most important field has been the Antiquities of Egypt and Babylonia. In this field we depend especially on the British Museum, where we are very glad to have Dr. L. W. King to speak for us,[1] as he has done with great energy—especially in the last few years. Our own scholars are at the present time well abreast of these studies.

[1] This can, alas, no longer be said. Dr. King died on August 20 of the present year at the early age of forty-nine—a truly grievous loss

Let us pause for a moment to look back at this mustering of forces—every one of substantial weight. I spoke of the 'Coming of Age' of the comparative study of Religion. I need not say that it was only a figure of speech. We have seen that the space of time really covered has been a full fifty years. But there is no doubt about the Coming of Age.

II

(1) The problem of divers religions is not really new. Both in Biblical times and in Patristic times there were different ways of regarding foreign religions. Indeed opposite tendencies were at work. On the one hand there are those generous pictures of the mountain of the Lord's house exalted above the top of the mountains, and the peoples flocking to it.[1] Zion becomes a rallying-point for the nations. There is not friction and antagonism, but a kind of willing acknowledgement by the heathen of the superiority of Israel's religion. This may be in part a reflection of the proud self-consciousness of Israel's prophets—an Isaiah or a Micah—perhaps drawing upon an older prophecy still, and in any case unshaken in their firmness of triumphant conviction. The prophets of Israel do not stay to count chariots and horses. Weak and insignificant as Israel may be compared to the greater powers—inferior to Damascus, and much more to Assyria or the revived Babylonia, the prophets of Israel do not abate one jot of their claims. They speak as if their God were supreme over

[1] Isa. ii. 2–4 = Mic. iv. 1–3.

heaven and earth and as if there was no resisting His will. Something we may believe is due to this confident faith projecting itself into the void. But there must also, we should think, have been some real objective foundation for the apparent recognition by the surrounding nations of something impressive in Israel's faith, and in Israel itself, what we might call perhaps the presence of a great soul in a small body. From time to time we see echoes of this. The returning exiles, more particularly, are carried along by a great enthusiasm. They dream of themselves as escorted back to their homes.

'They shall bring thy sons in their bosom, and thy daughters shall be carried upon their shoulders. And kings shall be thy nursing fathers, and their queens thy nursing mothers: they shall bow down to thee with their faces to the earth, and lick the dust of thy feet; and thou shalt know that I am the Lord, and they that wait for me shall not be ashamed.'[1]

Another striking passage, which can be dated about 520–516 B. C., is Zechariah viii. 22–3:

'Yea, many peoples and strong nations shall come to seek the Lord of hosts in Jerusalem, and to intreat the favour of the Lord. Thus saith the Lord of hosts: In those days it shall come to pass, that ten men shall take hold, out of all the languages of the nations, shall even take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew, saying, We will go with you, for we have heard that God is with you.'

This would be not more than about twenty years later than the passage just quoted.

[1] Isa. xlix. 22–4.

And while there are these friendly and deferential relations, doubtless somewhat idealized, on the part of the heathen, so also we find remarkable advances on the part of the spiritual leaders of Israel. I wonder if Psalm lxxxvii has all the effect that it deserves to have? Is it clearly understood what the picture is? It is the psalm which is the original of

> Glorious things of thee are spoken,
> Zion, city of our God.

But it is not only a glorification of Zion. The God of Zion is represented as holding a census of His citizens. They are being entered for registration in His book. God Himself is speaking:

> 'I will make mention of Rahab (i.e. Egypt) and Babylon as among them that know me.'
> 'Behold Philistia, and Tyre, with Ethiopia—this one was born there (i.e. the natives of Philistia and Tyre and Ethiopia are as if they had been born in Zion).'
> 'And of Zion it shall be said, "Each and every one was born in her; and he, the Most High, shall establish her".'

The new citizens join in a festal procession.

But I think that two of the most astonishing passages in the Old Testament are from Isaiah xix and from the prophet Malachi. The first is of quite uncertain date. When I read it I am reminded of the Sermon on the Mount, and 'the Father in heaven' who 'maketh His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sendeth rain on the just and the unjust'.

There is to be a highway out of Egypt to Assyria,

and the Assyrian is to come into Egypt, and the Egyptian into Assyria; and the Egyptians are to worship with the Assyrians.

'In that day shall Israel be the third with Egypt and with Assyria, a blessing in the midst of the earth: for that the Lord of hosts hath blessed them, saying, Blessed be Egypt my people, and Assyria the work of my hands, and Israel mine inheritance.'[1]

The passage in Malachi is different: but it too reminds us of the Sermon on the Mount. First a verse of rebuke:

'Oh that there were one among you that would shut the doors, that ye might not kindle fire on mine altar in vain! I have no pleasure in you, saith the Lord of hosts, neither will I accept an offering at your hand.'

Then the great verse, which is just a calm outlook on the heathen world.

'For from the rising of the sun even unto the going down of the same my name is great among the Gentiles; and in every place incense is offered unto my name, and a pure offering: for my name is great among the Gentiles, saith the Lord of hosts.'[2]

The heathen worships are virtually worship of Jehovah, and their offerings are acceptable to Him.

Compared to such passages as this, the almost contemporary work of Ezra and Nehemiah seems conceived

[1] Isa. xix. 24, 25. See, however, *Ch. Quart. Rev.*, July 1912, pp. 406–9. The view there expressed is attractive, and should supersede what is said in the text, both on this passage and on the next. The reference is probably not to Gentile religions but to scattered outgrowths of Judaism, like that revealed in the Elephantine papyri.

[2] Mal. i. 10, 11.

in a spirit of narrowness and exclusiveness, and the forced dissolution of marriages between the Jews and the surrounding peoples seems harsh and unfeeling. And yet there was reason for it. If things had gone on as they were going, the Jews would soon have lost the distinctiveness of their religion. We can also see that Ezra and Nehemiah were not only both of them men of much force of character but also of genuine and sincere piety.

(2) We turn from the Old Testament to the New. And here again two passages seem to stand out as helpful to us. There may quite well be more; but at the moment I think specially of two.

One is from the first chapter of Romans—a gloomy passage indeed, but very instructive as to the position of the heathen, what they might have been and what they were. It is implied that the heathen might have drawn right inferences as to the character and attributes of God from what they could see in nature, and adapted their cults to these inferences; but they had not done so.

Then there is the lighter and more genial speech of St. Paul at Lystra, in which he explains how God had not left Himself without witness, but had given to all men rains and fruitful seasons, filling their hearts with food and gladness.

These two passages between them might be said to be the charter of what is called 'Natural Religion'. I hope, if all 's well, to have more to say on this subject in the next lecture. I will then refer to the sense in which the phrase is used by Bishop Butler, and I will

also try to distinguish the change of meaning which it has to some extent undergone since his day. Perhaps I need not stay to enlarge on the special application of the two passages now. For our subject they are both important and valuable.

(3) There was a conception of which special use was made by the second-century Apologists that may suggest some analogy of reasoning to ourselves. This is the idea, borrowed from the Stoics, of λόγος σπερματικός. Whatever there was in the world of right thought and right conduct was due to the presence and operation of scattered germs of Divine Reason. If Christians showed more of these it was because for them the Divine Reason was incarnate bodily in Christ. Among the heathen a like incarnation was partial. It was the mark of conspicuous virtue—as seen in the best of the pagan philosophers and poets.[1] It was an amiable and open-minded doctrine, and it did credit both to the head and the heart of those who held it.

On the other hand, the corruption of the truth was set down to the perverting influence of demons, who systematically travestied the details of Christian doctrine and Christian worship. A belief in the activity of demons was widespread throughout antiquity. It had played a large part both in Egyptian religion and in Babylonian. On both sides of the Christian era it was equally rife in Jewish and in pagan circles. From these it came to the Apologists; and in their hands it is apt to seem to us petty and puerile. And yet the haunting

[1] Justin Martyr, *Apol.* ii. 7, 13.

mystery of evil was always there; and it could only find expression in the current forms.

(4) There was a text in the Epistle to the Romans which easily lent itself to misapplication. We know how robust and yet how sensitive was the conscience of the apostle of the Gentiles. The intercourse of Christians and non-Christians left dangerous openings for casuistry. Only an honest and yet a free demeanour could keep the heart right and the judgement clear. This was the 'faith' which the apostle urged his disciple to keep to himself before God. If he once began to entangle himself in hair-splitting sophistries he was lost: 'he that doubteth is condemned if he eat, because he eateth not of faith; and whatsoever is not of faith is sin.'[1] But the 'faith' that is here described would be quite wide of the mark if it were taken in the sense of belief or creed. It was by such a side-track as this that St. Augustine was supposed to have been led to the saying attributed to him, which I believe is really apocryphal: *virtutes gentium splendida vitia.* He did not say anything quite so pointed as this or quite so extreme; but he did argue that there cannot be real virtue where there is not true religion, and that certain virtues *vitia sunt potius quam virtutes.*[2] As far back as Origen[3] it had been pointed out that the proposition was stated in a general form, and the question had been discussed whether or not it referred to heretics. And at the Reformation it is laid down in like manner,

[1] Rom. xiv. 23. [2] *de Civ. Dei* xix. 25.
[3] ad loc., *Comm.* x. 5.

e. g. by Peter Martyr, that 'the good workes of heretikes are to them made sins'.

III

(1) Now the first question that I have to ask is what exactly is the view generally taken of Comparative Religion? Is there a view that has been really thought out, and that has any weight of consent behind it?

I ask this question, not as a figure of speech, but honestly for the sake of information; I am not at all sure what is the answer to it myself.

My impression is that the study of Comparative Religion has rather grown up by the side of Theology in a sort of loose parallelism with it, than as a part of it. We think of it more as leading an independent and precarious existence outside than as sheltered beneath the same roof. So far as I can recollect, the systematic theologians have let it alone, and have not defined their own attitude towards it. But they have not actively opposed it.

If we run through the names which I enumerated just now as those of leaders in the study, it will be seen that all but one have been laymen. Sir E. B. Tylor and Andrew Lang were laymen. Robertson Smith is the first great name which is not that of a layman. And I would not say that he was not interested in doctrine. He was interested in doctrine; but I think that his primary interest was in science, and that it was from the side of science that he approached the whole group of subjects with which he has been chiefly

associated. Professor Max Müller was a layman, though he edited a series of Sacred Books. I need not say that Sir James Frazer is very lay. Our own students of the Classical Religions are all lay. Our leading Assyriologists and Egyptologists have not been exclusively but predominantly lay. In this respect the question of calling has been, I think it may be said, more or less accidental. At the same time I am aware that it is from this side of Egyptological and Assyriological learning and archaeology generally that our theologians have been drawn to the study of Comparative Religion. I welcome the fact; and I venture to say that I do not think the study could be in better hands. I believe it to be fortunate that hitherto (to the best of my belief) no theological shibboleths have been involved.

And yet I do not think that I was wrong in saying that, so far as systematic theology and what may be called the general theological public are concerned, the study of Comparative Religion has been rather tolerated than encouraged.

(2) This is the state of things which I venture to think should come to an end. The new science has become too deeply involved. The mass of materials collected under it has become too great. What I would suggest is that we should frankly take up this mass of materials and bring it into line with those of a higher order that we have already before us; that we should try to work up the whole into a single scheme. I submit that, if we study sympathetically the evolutionary

process—if we map it out in its broad tracts and masses—we shall see that it has had a certain relative rightness. That which has been, has been upon the whole—if only in the secondary sense of divine permission rather than divine command—that which God has willed should be. It has contributed in the end to the carrying out of His purposes. A residuum still remains over in the execution of those purposes; and this residuum cannot be neglected. Some account of it should be taken if we are to understand the design of God for the world.

I hope to have more to say on this subject in the next lecture, and to illustrate more freely the kind of use that I think may be made of this secondary matter.

(3) I should be very reluctant even to seem to say anything in disparagement of Biblical Religion. If I should seem to do this, it would be only in the effort to make my statements as true as I can make them.

We are concerned for the time specially with the Old Testament. And I have no doubt that, before we come to the New Testament, the Old Testament is in a special sense the classical book of Religion. It is so in a double sense. It not only lays down the highest and truest conception of God, but it also furnishes by far the best object-lesson of the nature of religion. The Hebrew prophets and holy men were possessed with God in a way in which no other race has been. Christianity itself is built up out of the same essential elements. Hebraism has been the training-ground in

which the human soul has learnt how to bear itself in the presence of the Divine. This is the great outstanding fact, the one permanent gain. Compared with this everything else is secondary.

(4) And yet there are two paradoxical and rather confusing features. The Bible as a classical and sacred volume points one way; the Bible as a history of a religious development points another. The book is one thing; the history of the religion is a different thing. To some extent the literary history and the actual religious history have an opposite effect, and play at cross-purposes.

There are two things that we should try to grasp clearly in our own minds. One is that the ideal element in the Bible—the Bible as a norm and standard of religion—is relatively late. The other is that there is also an element that is early and primitive and in touch with the surrounding religions. And these two elements cross and intersect each other in such a way as to neutralize the impression which each would give by itself.

We cannot perhaps have a better example of this than that which is given by the early chapters of Genesis.

(5) I cannot doubt that the very first chapter of all has contributed greatly to the reception of the Bible as a sacred book. What a noble opening it is! How simple, grave, and solemn! How large and elevated and truly spiritual in its background! And on the other hand, when once we have made full

allowance for the stage of scientific knowledge implied in it, when we do not think of it as science in the modern acceptation of the word, but as translated into the forms of vision, and that religious vision, we shall I think feel the deep inner fitness and congruity.

But then we have to remember that all this is late—probably after the Exile—not far removed from the time of the Great Unknown, the so-called Second Isaiah.

Really this first chapter of Genesis—to the end of ii. 3—is a sort of façade, like that in some of the great cathedrals, built on as it were before the front of the succeeding chapters. The Hebraists are enthusiastic over the beautiful flowing and idiomatic Hebrew of the primitive writer who follows; and they are apt to be somewhat critical of the comparative stiffness of the author who contributes the framework and opening. But we are not concerned so much with the style as with the conception of the world and of God. And here there is no comparison in respect to maturity and elevation. There is probably something like three full centuries between the two writers—the one perhaps 850–800 B.C.; the other about 500 B.C.

The later writer's work is grouped with that of the writing prophets, the exilic writers, and the psalmists. Along with these, it strikes the characteristic note that has made the Bible a sacred book. It does not allow us to forget that we are dealing with a classic of religion.

(6) But at the same time, by covering and preserving

the natural features of the older document, it asserts the continuity which links up this sacred book with the realism and seeming imperfection of the evolutionary order. It is the naiveties of the Jehovist, his strong anthropomorphisms and touches of the vernacular—this walking in the garden, and sewing of fig-leaves, and smelling of sweet savour and the like—which have made the Bible not only a sacred book but also the book of the people. This is that side of the Bible which has caused it to twine itself round the affections—along with other books like *The Pilgrim's Progress*, which have been modelled upon it.

We are reminded of the fact that—in spite of the divine element in the Bible, the influence and shaping from above, the infusing of that which is in advance of nature—it is none the less at the same time a growth, an evolution from below. It has grown as human things grow—by endless experiment, by contact and imitation.

It has never been the will of God that the disciples should be taken out of the world. They are left in the world in order that they may leaven it. And the same metaphor of leaven is the type of God's action. We may and we do analyse the process into its parts. But the analysis is from without and artificial. The real divine process has the perfect cohesion and infinite continuity of life.

(7) In a broad sense, the two processes must be thought of as succeeding each other in order of time. The higher and more intensive seems to have been made possible by the fact that it had been preceded by

the lower. To us it seems as if in the lower what we should call the human element preponderated. We should hardly venture to carry back the higher much behind Moses. Even in the time of Moses we should recognize the presence of the higher inspiration rather in the form of germinal ideas or principles than in any completed system. We have but to think of the significance for Israel of the fundamental ideas, (i) that Israel's God was a righteous God, and (ii) that He claimed to be served by a righteous people. In those two propositions we seem to have the ultimate germs of all the later development.

But far back behind Moses religion had been there, struggling under conditions that we do not naturally associate with inspiration, marked by all that prodigality of experiment and slowness and uncertainty of advance that are characteristic of Evolution; like the tide, advancing and retiring, retiring and advancing; gaining a little here, and losing a little there; fluctuating backwards and forwards, but gaining in the end and on the whole. It is impossible to think of this process as 'without God', though we may think of it as from our subjective point of view depending rather on the general course of Divine Providence than on what we are apt to call the more direct and immediate influence of God. It is just such a case as seems to embody the spirit of Clough's lines:

> In front, the sun climbs slow, how slowly,
> But westward, look, the land is bright!

If we make our periods long enough, and look first

at the beginning and then at the end, there can be no doubt about the progress or the reality of the Divine overruling. The ultimate balance is on the side of good, though in intermediate or shorter periods the truth of this may be obscured.

II

NATURAL AND REVEALED RELIGION

II

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Let us go back in thought to Bishop Butler. He shared with his contemporaries a sufficiently simple and clear-cut scheme of things. But he differed from most of his contemporaries in his profound sense of the mystery lying all round this simple and clear-cut scheme.

One strong point about the theory, and a point in which it is calculated to give a lead to us now, is that it was a complete and comprehensive unity.

Butler thought of Religion as subsisting in two grades or stages. He and his contemporaries agreed in calling one grade Natural Religion and the other Revealed.

There were some minor differences between them. Mr. Gladstone, for instance, pointed out[1] that Butler really made a threefold division. He called his first compartment 'the constitution and course of nature'; and he regarded the belief in God as given by this constitution and course of nature. The division does not seem a good one, and I do not think that it occurs more than once. But the language does not seem to bear any other construction. Natural Religion included for Butler the belief in a future life, with a system of rewards and punishments attached to this future life,

[1] In his note on *Analogy*, I. ii. 4.

and a consequent description of the present life as a state of probation or discipline looking forward to the future. Other writers of the time embraced all these three heads under the common name of Natural Religion; and they were sometimes expressed more concisely under the three single terms: God—Freedom or Virtue (according as stress was laid on the moral quality of the actions or the condition which made this moral quality possible)—Immortality.

It is more important to note that while Butler and his fellows had a quite definite and clear idea of the contents of Natural Religion, they seem to have had a very vague idea of the process by which it was arrived at. Butler himself thought that Natural Religion went back to a primitive revelation. He could not think of the process as philosophical, because he does not believe that the truths of natural religion either could or would have been arrived at by reason;[1] he asks his readers to consider 'how unapt for speculation rude and uncultivated minds are'. He could not have thought of the process as historical: because he shows no sign of having made any attempt to work out the history, nor had he the data for doing so. Neither does he seem to have generalized in anything more than the roughest prima facie way from the phenomena of the religions actually existing at the time. We can see that he is really guessing. For instance he ventures upon the following statement, which certainly goes beyond his evidence.

[1] *Analogy*, II. i. 1.

'It is certain historical fact, so far as we can trace things up, that this whole system of belief, that there is one God, the Creator and moral Governor of the world, and that mankind is in a state of religion, was received in the first ages.'[1]

The very idea of 'one God, the Creator and moral Governor of the world' is an advanced religious conception, and could not possibly be primitive.

It does not perhaps necessarily follow that Butler need be so far wrong in his belief that man owes his knowledge of God and religion to a primitive revelation. In the last resort we may have to say that the religious illumination of mankind is due to divine influences of greater or less intensity. But this will need further explanation, and we should express it perhaps rather differently than Butler did.

I

Between Bishop Butler's day and our own there have intervened two great factors which have placed the whole question upon a new footing.

(1) There is, first, the vast accumulation of material bearing upon the History of Religion or what we call Comparative Religion. I sketched some of the main lines of this process in the last lecture, and showed that it might be easily contained within the period of the last fifty years.

(2) And there is, second, the great idea of Evolution, which we have come to regard as covering the whole of

[1] Op. cit. I. vi. 17.

history, from the first beginnings of the universe so far as we can trace them down to our own time. We may take this idea as practically dating from the appearance of Darwin's *Origin of Species* in 1859.

It requires an effort to realize, truism as it is, that to write the history of Religion we have to begin with a *tabula rasa.* We have to go back to the cave-men. When man first appeared upon the earth, everything existed *in posse* but absolutely nothing *in esse.* The creature newly stranded upon the earth's surface, from the first moment that he acquired a substantive existence, was left—or seemed to be left—to his own resources. Whatever divine help might be awaiting him, was as yet invisible and potential. If the details of the early history of Religion are apt to seem sordid, it could not be otherwise. The problem begins at the very outset.

Presumptuous man! the reason wouldst thou find,
Why form'd so weak, so little, and so blind?
First, if thou canst, the harder reason guess,
Why form'd no weaker, blinder, and no less?

So far as the great problem is concerned, we are no further now than we were when Pope wrote his *Essay on Man* in 1734 or when Butler published his *Analogy* in 1736.

We cannot tell a whit better than we could why God has thought fit to construct the universe on the principle of Evolution. That is a problem which by the nature of the case must be immeasurably beyond us. If we followed our own instincts and our own shortsightedness

we might expect rather that He would have acted upon some such principle as that of simultaneous perfection. Only one thought may occur to us. That is the thought that Evolution, more than any other principle of which it seems possible to conceive, admits of absolutely infinite extension and variety. A static universe, however perfect, seems at least as if we must come to the end of it much sooner.[1] It is rather waste of time to puzzle our brains with these insoluble riddles. It seems wiser to take the world as it is and try to understand it on the basis of the laws by which it is certainly governed.

Evolution is one of those laws. And it seems to have also a corollary which is not much less fertile as a principle of understanding. There is one absolute axiom, one golden rule, which seems to be correlative to the principle of Evolution. That is, wherever the process of evolution exists, it must be judged by the ends and not by the beginnings.

If we hold fast to this, no seeming crudities or imperfections can ever seriously trouble us. They all belong to the past, and all lie more or less behind us. They are there only to be emerged from; they exist only to be vanquished.

II

Religion begins with a blank. But everything begins with a blank. It seems almost too much to say that Man began as a conscious being. He began as a sentient being, with the potentiality of consciousness. Ought

[1] See Browning's poem 'Rephan'.

we to say more? Does not consciousness imply the differentiation of feelings? And is not that a further and distinct step onwards? I can quite believe that these early stages in the history of thought were got through very rapidly. The whole mental faculty of the new being was concentrated upon them. And I can also well believe that there was divine help in the process. Selden was apparently right when he said that Providence concurred in everything.[1] But to us it seems as if there were different degrees of concurrence; and we can only speak as they appear to us. We do not know them as they really are.

The stage of Religion begins at the point where there grows up a sense or impression of a Something outside which co-operates with or thwarts the impulses or desires from within. At first the idea of this Something was very vague. And men looked about them to see if they could identify it in anything near them that they could hear or see. The multitude of objects confused them. But it was natural that they should guess at something of unusual shape, or that gave forth an unusual sound, or that in some other way was weird and strange. It was in this way that primitive man arrived at Fetishism or Totemism. Fetishism would take the form of some prominent and curious stump or stone. Totemism would take the form of some uncanny beast or bird or reptile. Totemism might give place to Animal-worship on a larger scale. The ancient world was full of fierce and savage beasts, who

[1] *Table Talk*, *s. v.* 'Marriage'.

were formidable enemies of man and could contend with him on more equal terms than they can now. This contending with the beasts was probably no small stimulus to invention, both of material weapons and the use of them, and in social organization. The hunt must have been one of the oldest forms of society. The advantages of combination for one kind of purpose would soon lead to the practice of combination for others.

Meantime other causes would be at work. The images that float before the mind in dreams would be the first to suggest the idea of spirits. Consciousness of the inner working of the mind itself would suggest the attribution of a similar working to external objects; and it would be some time before the difference would be understood between the objects that we call animate and those that we call inaminate. Such processes as these would explain the rise of different kinds of Animism. One of the most distinctive and highest forms of Animism was Ancestor-worship. This was very widespread in remote antiquity. And by the time that we have come to Ancestor-worship we are really entering upon the higher region. You will remember the attractive picture drawn for us in Pater's *Marius the Epicurean.* The ancient Roman household was an active school of 'piety'. Its seriousness, its simplicity, its grave manners, its careful observance, its sense of responsibility, were an excellent training for worship on a more extended scale and with a more exalted object.

Then again Anthropomorphism was a distinct advance

upon Animal-worship. To invest the idea of deity with the qualities of men was at least better than to invest it with the qualities of animals. By this time the human mind had begun to climb the staircase of the ideal. The abstract idea of deity was being formed; and the step from the abstract idea to the spiritual idea was not so very long.

Before this point has been reached, we are already conscious of a great widening of the horizon. The worship of the greater Powers of Nature must stand high in the scale of religious values.

III

This is the point that I think I will choose at which to introduce specimens of the real religious contents of some of these pagan faiths. Suppose that by this time the ladder has been reared by which the human spirit has ascended to the point to which we have brought it; let us too climb and see what we find at the top. I do not know how far your experience will correspond to mine. But I was certainly astonished when I first made the discovery which I am about to impart to you. I will take two examples, first from the religion of Egypt, then from the religion of Babylonia. I think it may be best simply to state the examples first, and not until we have done so attempt to weigh them. But when they have been stated and to some extent weighed, I think that we may perhaps put them to a further use by trying to draw some kind of inference

as to the way in which they may be applied with reference to the History of Religion as a whole and its bearing upon our own day.

Amenhotep (Amenophis) IV was a Pharaoh of the Eighteenth Dynasty whose date can be approximately fixed. He succeeded his father Amenhotep III about 1375 B.C. and died about 1358. His reign falls within the period covered by the famous Tell el-Amarna tablets. He was not a strong or a resolute ruler. As a ruler, his heart was not in his task, and under him the wide empire built up by his predecessors in the dynasty gradually crumbled away. But he was a genius in religion. He carried out a great religious reform, the object of which was to concentrate worship on Aton, 'the disk of the sun'. He ended by breaking with the powerful priesthood of Amon at Thebes and moving his court to a new city which he founded on the site now known as Tell el-Amarna and called it Akhetaton; and he changed his own name to Ikhnaton or Akhnaton. On the walls of the neighbouring cliff-tombs are inscribed texts of a hymn which apparently formed part of the ritual of the worship of Aton. We have to put aside for a moment the fact that this ritual is addressed to a material and created object; and how easy it is to forget this! The hymn reads like pure monotheism. The author was thinking indeed of the visible sun, but he thought of it as a god.

It is an inevitable drawback that I can quote only fragments of what is itself a collection of fragments. I avail myself of the carefully revised text in J. H.

Breasted's *Development of Religion and Thought in Ancient Egypt* (1912).

The hymn begins with a description of the rising and setting of the sun's disk (Aton).

Thy dawning is beautiful in the horizon of the sky,
O living Aton, Beginning of life!
When thou risest in the eastern horizon,
Thou fillest every land with thy beauty.
Thou art beautiful, great, glittering, high above every land,
Thy rays, they encompass the lands, even all that thou hast made.
Thou art Re[1], and thou carriest them all away captive;
Thou bindest them by thy love.
Though thou art far away, thy rays are upon earth;
Though thou art on high, thy [footprints are the day].

When thou settest in the western horizon of the sky,
The earth is in darkness like the dead;
They sleep in their chambers,
Their heads are wrapped up,
Their nostrils are stopped,
And none seeth the other.

Then comes a picture of the way in which the sunrise is saluted by men and animals, even the smallest.

Bright is the earth when thou risest in the horizon.
When thou shinest as Aton by day
Thou drivest away the darkness.
When thou sendest forth thy rays,
The Two Lands (Egypt, Northern and Southern) are in daily festivity,
Awake and standing upon their feet

[1] An ancient name for the sun-god; there is a play on words here as the name also means 'all'.

When thou hast raised them up.
Their limbs bathed, they take their clothing,
Their arms uplifted in adoration to thy dawning.
(Then) in all the world they do their work.

All cattle rest upon their pasturage,
The trees and the plants flourish,
The birds flutter in their marshes,
Their wings uplifted in adoration to thee.
All the sheep dance upon their feet,
All winged things fly,
They live when thou hast shone upon them.

We might be reading Wordsworth's great Ode; but what follows goes beyond Wordsworth.

When the fledgling in the egg chirps in the shell,
Thou givest him breath therein to preserve him alive.
When thou hast [brought him together],
To (the point of) bursting it in the egg,
He cometh forth from the egg
To chirp [with all his might].
He goeth about upon his two feet
When he hath come forth therefrom.

Then again praise of Aton as Creator, whose benefits extend not only to Egypt but to Syria and Ethiopia. Egypt (which is almost rainless) has the Nile; foreign countries have as it were a Nile in the sky, which waters the earth in the form of rain.

How manifold are thy works!
They are hidden from before (us),
O sole God, whose powers no other possesseth.
Thou didst create the earth according to thy heart
While thou wast alone:
Men, all cattle large and small,
All that are upon the earth,
That go about upon their feet;

All that are on high,
That fly with their wings.

. . . . . .

Thou makest the Nile in the Nether World,
Thou bringest it as thou desirest,
To preserve alive the people.
For thou hast made them for thyself,
The lord of them all, resting among them,
Thou Sun of day, great in majesty.
All the distant countries,
Thou makest (also) their life,
Thou hast set a Nile in the sky;
When it falleth for them,
It maketh waves upon the mountains,
Like the great green sea,
Watering their fields in their towns.

How excellent are thy designs, O lord of eternity!
There is a Nile in the sky for the strangers
And for the cattle of every country that go upon their feet.
(But) the Nile, it cometh from the Nether World for Egypt.

Then yet more praise of Aton, whose work varies according to the seasons; an acknowledgement of the revelation which he has put in the heart of the king.

Thy rays nourish every garden;
When thou risest they live,
They grow by thee.
Thou makest the seasons
In order to create all thy work:
Winter to bring them coolness,
And heat that [they may taste] thee.
Thou didst make the distant sky to rise therein,
In order to behold all that thou hast made,

Thou alone, shining in thy form as living Aton,
Dawning, glittering, going afar and returning.
Thou makest millions of forms
Through thyself alone;
Cities, towns, and tribes, highways and rivers.
All eyes see thee before them,
For thou art Aton of the day over the earth.

. . . . . .

Thou art in my heart,
There is no other that knoweth thee
Save thy son Ikhnaton.
Thou hast made him wise
In thy designs and in thy might.
The world is in thy hand,
Even as thou hast made them.
When thou hast risen they live,
When thou settest they die;
For thou art length of life of thyself,
Men live through thee,
While (their) eyes are upon thy beauty
Until thou settest.
All labor is put away
When thou settest in the west.[1]

What a sense of life runs through the poem! What a sense of dependent life, and of joy and delight in this dependence! What a combination of largeness and minuteness—the largeness seen in the range of thought, which is not only in no wise bounded by Egyptian territory but extends to the surrounding nations as well, and embraces all the multitudinous forms of being; the minuteness seen in the delicately sympathetic descriptions of nature, and especially in that lovely stanza about the chicken breaking its shell, which the

[1] Op. cit. pp. 324–8.

sun's light penetrates and imparts life and the joy of life even before the chick itself is born.

I need hardly point out the resemblance to the hundred and fourth Psalm, with which, great as it is, this Egyptian poem may well sustain comparison, though it was written in all probability centuries before, indeed more than a century before the date commonly assigned to the Exodus.

The hymn exists in a shorter form as well as a longer. I was obliged to quote from the latter, in order to do justice to the various points which I have tried to bring out. But the shorter form is in some respects even more impressive in force and concentration of expression. In more than one of the texts I gather that the hymn is expressly ascribed to the Pharaoh himself; it can hardly have proceeded from any but the leading spirit of the movement to which it belongs.

It is a notable fact that the same king appears to have invented or developed a new style of art corresponding to his new form of religion. Like so much of the dominant art of Ancient Egypt generally, it is expressed only in outline. But it is a striking example —perhaps the most striking in the whole history of Egypt—of the effect of which this outline-art was capable. A new and remarkable symbol was employed to bring home the power of the sun-god.[1] He literally 'rains influence down'. The rays are shafts which terminate in tiny hands. In the case of the king and queen these hands are armed with the symbol of life,

[1] See the frontispiece.

which touches their lips as if conveying inspiration. And the same naturalness and tender human feeling find expression as in the poem. The royal pair are represented fondling their children in the freedom and privacy of domestic life.

Still a vein of fanaticism appears in the antagonism to the old religion. And it is not surprising that the death of Ikhnaton should have been followed by a violent reaction. In a short time the priesthood and worship of Amon recovered their power; the memory of the reforming Pharaoh was denounced and the traces of his work in turn swept away. And yet it had not been altogether in vain. A real spirit of piety and devoutness had been evoked, which gradually spread among the lower classes and made itself felt in the traditional religion.

We must not expect to find progress always direct and unimpeded. From time to time the human spirit seems to put forth an exceptional effort. Then it relapses and sinks back exhausted. But all the while some solid ground is won; and in another wholly different quarter a new advance is made.

Both in Egypt and in Babylonia there was a large element of magic mixed up with religion. But, as I have said, magic was also a nursing-ground of science. In Babylonia it largely took the form of astrology. But the Chaldaean priests in their contemplation of the heavens made many a sound observation; and out of these, as they came in contact with the quicker Hellenic mind, there gradually grew up the science of astronomy.

The Babylonians had gifts of another kind.

They were a serious people, and they must have had a highly developed sense of justice. It was a great surprise to the learned world when the French explorers discovered on the site of Susa (Shushan), where it had been carried by an Elamite conqueror, the famous Stele of Hammurabi, inscribed with a whole code of law which is presented to the King by the sun-god Shamash.[1] The date of Hammurabi is now fixed almost exactly at 2123–2081 B.C. The spirit of the code comes out sufficiently in the introduction:

'When the supreme Anu, king of the Anunnaki (along with Igigi, "collective names for a lower order of gods"), and Enlil, the lord of heaven and earth, who fixes the destiny of the land, had committed to Marduk, the first-born of Ea, the rule of all mankind, making him great among the Igigi, gave to Babylon his supreme name, making it pre-eminent in the regions (of the world), and established therein an enduring kingdom, firm in its foundation like heaven and earth—at that time they appointed me, Hammurapi[2], the exalted ruler, the one who fears the gods, to let justice shine in the land, to destroy the wicked and unjust that the strong should not oppress the weak, that I should go forth like the sun over mankind.'[3]

Dr. Jastrow comments further upon this:

'It is significant that he refers to his conquests only incidentally, and lays the chief stress upon what he did for the gods and for men, enumerating the temples that

[1] This was first published in Paris in 1894.

[2] Dr. Jastrow says that this is the more correct spelling; but the other is I believe universal in this country.

[3] *Religious Belief in Babylonia and Assyria*, M. Jastrow Jr., p. 35.

he built and beautified, the security that he obtained for his subjects, the protection that he granted to those in need of aid. "Law and justice", he concludes, "I established in the land and promoted the well-being of the people."'[1]

The Babylonians, as I have said, were a serious people, and their religion was a serious religion. They did not make light of sin; but when they were conscious of it, they confessed it with much earnestness. Specially characteristic are the penitential psalms, which are not unworthy to be the genuine prototype of those in the Jewish Canon. Dr. Jastrow gives an interesting account of them.

'Confession and lament are the burden of these psalms:

Many are my sins that I have committed,
May I escape this misfortune, may I be relieved from distress!

and again:

My eye is filled with tears,
On my couch I lie at night, full of sighs,
Tears and sighing have bowed me down.

The indications are distinct in these compositions that they formed part of a ritual, in which the officiating

[1] Ibid., p. 36. Similarly, Dr. Burney (*Judges*, p. lxii): 'Hammurabi was not merely a conqueror, but in the best sense an organizer and ruler; and it is probable that any region over which he claimed the title of "king" was not a mere sphere for occasional razzias aimed at the collection of booty and tribute, but would experience, at least to some extent, the benefits of his good government and civilizing influence.' [This last statement in correction of Hogarth, *The Ancient East*, pp. 24 f.]

priest and the [royal] penitent each had his part. The priest, as mediator, enforces the appeal of the penitent:

He weeps, overpowered he cannot restrain himself.
Thou hearest earnest lament, turn thy countenance to him!
Thou acceptest petition, look faithfully on him!
Thou receivest prayer, turn thy countenance to him!
Lord of prayer and petition, let the prayer reach thee!
Lord of petition and prayer, let the prayer reach thee!

The appeal is here made to Enlil, Marduk, and Nebo, and closes with the refrain which is frequent in the penitential psalms:

May thy heart be at rest, thy liver be appeased!
May thy heart like the heart of the young mother,—
Like that of the mother who has borne, and of the father who has begotten,—return to its place!'[1]

I cannot afford to dwell longer on these psalms; but I must content myself with saying that, just as Ikhnaton gave expression to a high type of *adoration*, so did the Babylonians to a high type of *penitence*. It is utterly out of the question to dismiss these things as products of unenlightened heathenism. It is quite certain that they are part of the witness which in every age God has left us of Himself. It is for this reason that I said that after all Bishop Butler was not so very far wrong, though he had not quite succeeded in finding the right formula for the facts, when he set them down to a 'primitive revelation'. We must think of them rather as due to a continuous Divine guidance, hardly differing in kind from that special selective process that we call

[1] Op. cit., p. 329; compare the same author's *Civilization of Babylonia and Assyria* (1915), pp. 469 ff.

revelation, but only covering a wider ground and leaving more freedom for the play of human initiative. If we may allow ourselves to think of God as the great Organist of the universe, then all the difference that there would be would correspond to slightly less or slightly more sustained pressure upon the keys.

IV

Can we discover any laws or general expressions which may help us to put such episodes as these in their places in the course of religious evolution and assign to them their values in the upward ascent? The suggestion that I have to make is only tentative, and I do not attach much importance to it. But would anything be gained by bringing them under such heads as (i) transference of object; (ii) refinement of method?

For an example of 'transference of object', need we go further than the hymn of Amenophis IV which I have just quoted at some length? The hymn shows us the act of Adoration or Worship carried (surely) to a high degree of perfection. I have already commented on the remarkable combination of largeness and delicacy. I do not very well see how anything—at least at that date—could possibly be larger. The triumphant course of the Sun across the heavens; the ecstatic rejoicing that greets his appearance; his eye of supreme command; his influence penetrating every nook and corner. And then that sweet image of the chick issuing forth from its shell, and responding to the light before it issues forth. Would not that picture have

been worthy to be introduced into the Hundred and Fourth Psalm?

'That he may bring food out of the earth, and wine that maketh glad the heart of man: and oil to make him a cheerful countenance, and bread to strengthen man's heart.

The trees of the Lord also are full of sap: even the cedars of Libanus which he hath planted;

Wherein the birds make their nests: and the fir-trees are a dwelling for the stork.

The high hills are a refuge for the wild goats: and so are the stony rocks for the conies.'

Even the conies are not touched with so fine a pencil as that poor little fledgeling stepping out into the wide world and in the spirit of him and in his small degree rejoicing like a giant to run his course.

It is true that Amenophis worshipped a created object—perhaps the grandest, or one of the grandest, of all created objects. But when we think of the penetrating way in which he enters into the spirit of this self-chosen worship—when we think of the near approach that he makes to Monotheism, and the no less near approach that he makes to the conception of personality, and of divine personality—when we think of the poetry and elevation, the tender feeling and insight with which he invests his whole handling of the subject, does he not seem almost to rise through the creature to the Creator? Does not the created thing become a symbol, a vehicle to something higher? Is it too much to say that he is almost—if it is really necessary to insert an 'almost'—in touch with God?

V

I will venture upon another example—another tentative example—of the other head; of what may be done in the way of purifying and spiritualizing a religious conception.

In the year 1906 Sir J. G. Frazer brought out a special part of his great work *The Golden Bough* under the triple title *Adonis—Attis—Osiris*, which has since been incorporated in the third edition. It illustrates with extraordinary wealth of learning the three allied cults which held a prominent place in the regions of the Eastern Levant. Really Adonis was the Greek equivalent of the older Babylonian deity Tammuz, whose rites are mentioned as having made their way to Jerusalem in Ezek. viii. 14. The worship of Adonis was localized especially at Byblus on the coast of Syria and at Paphos in Cyprus. By the systematic application of comparative mythology and comparative religion Sir J. G. Frazer is able to prove the fundamental identity of the three cults along with their local differences.

There is no doubt that all three are associated with the growth of vegetation. It is true that the time of year of the great festivals varies. But that is only because of the difference in the incidence of agricultural operations. The position of Egypt, as fertilized by the Nile, was peculiar. It is also probable that a certain amount of dislocation had been caused by the confusion and readjustment of the Egyptian calendar.[1]

[1] Op. cit., p. 265.

The ceremonies which constituted the three worships were essentially bound up with the critical moments of seed-time and harvest. The spring festival represented rejoicing at the new birth of the god; the harvest festival represented mourning at his departure. Doubtless ideas of magic were much wrapped up in both. The worshippers by their rites thought that they were helping the god to accomplish the processes which contributed so much to their welfare. Magic, as we have seen, was only an older, lower, and cruder form of prayer. It was a rudimentary stage, more or less mixed in its content from the first, which must be thought of as underlying all the prayer and devotion of to-day.

That would seem to be an account of what, humanly speaking, might be called the origin of these associated cults. But it is far from being the whole of the matter. Round the worship there grew up a mythology. And that mythology was the life-story of a god. The story was a humanized form of the original idea. Before it could revive, the seed planted in the ground had to decay and die. There was a death followed by a resurrection.

In the later forms of the cult these ideas become the most prominent. We are most familiar with the Hellenized version through the fifteenth idyll of Theocritus, written at Alexandria about 270 B. C., and vividly reproduced in Matthew Arnold's essay on 'Pagan and Mediaeval Religious Sentiment'. In this the effect has become mainly aesthetic. It is poetry passing into and annexed by religion. It is

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a scenic representation of the story of the dying and rising god.

That is the sum of the whole matter, so far as the ancient religious application is concerned. We see it at two stages: the first as a series of magical rites which have for their object to promote the fertility of crops and herds. This is gradually supplanted by the human story of the dying and the rising deity.

That is all the external history of the matter. And we need not go any further. But the Christian cannot help being struck by the strange coincidence with the mysteries—the central mystery—of his own religion. He is reminded of the manifold applications in the New Testament of the same idea of dying and rising again. It begins in historical, if transcendent fact, an historic Death and an historic Resurrection. It is applied liturgically, in the rite of Baptism which is frequently described under the same metaphor;[1] it is applied ethically to the putting off of the old man and the walking in newness of life.

There is not the slightest real connexion between the pagan ideas and the Christian ideas. And yet, is it possible that the coincidence can be wholly accidental? Can we help seeing in it the hand of God? It is in each case on so large a scale. The three cults of which we have been speaking occupy a large space in ancient religion. Must we not think that there was something prophetic about them? A sort of divine guidance which made them point beyond themselves?

[1] Rom. vi. 4, &c.

Such things as these—and there are not a few other examples—make us ask whether there are not in the universe certain fundamental tendencies, 'pre-established harmonies', which find expression from time to time and bear witness to the unity of their origin? We are in a region here which is rather that of pious belief than of demonstration. But there certainly is room for such beliefs, and they fall in with the overwhelming proof that the universe has a single Author and a single goal.

III

ON THE NATURE OF MIRACLE

III

ON THE NATURE OF MIRACLE

[*It has happened to me in regard to this lecture as I suppose must have often happened to lecturers before. At the time when the course was announced in the Gazette this third lecture was not written; it was not even begun. I could only give a title which expressed my intention in writing it,* 'On some Debated Points of Present-day Theology'. *As actually written it would be more fitly described if I were to call it:*

'On the Nature of Miracle.'

But there is something more in my mind than a change of title. Behind it there lies a real modification in the position which I desire to defend. That modification is only four days old. It did not occur to me until quite two-thirds of the lecture had been written. It is in one sense a modification of form rather than of substance. It expresses what I should all along have wished to say; but I had not quite got to the point of defining it as I propose to do. There is a distinct shade of meaning that ought to be conveyed and that I know I should not have succeeded in conveying.

There is this further happy consequence. My task has been a difficult one, and I have been conscious of a

considerable amount of tension in writing. But I have some hope that, with the modification of which I am thinking, the tension may be almost, if not completely, relaxed. I will tell you, if I may, when I come to it, the exact point at which the new turn came to me. I hardly think that I need alter anything that I had written before that point was reached.]

I CANNOT conceal from myself that for some years past—in fact since 1912—I have seemed to hold extreme views on certain questions of theology. Up till now, in my capacity as professor, I have kept complete silence about them. But on this last occasion, when I am laying down my chair, it seems right that I should break the silence and for once publicly explain my position. I believe I can do so in few words.

I may begin by saying that I am not one of those who exalt the authority of the teaching office. It happened to me once or twice, not here but in old days when I was at Durham where the world was perhaps more docile, to be approached by pupils who would come to me and say, 'You see, Sir, we come to you to tell us what we ought to think.' I replied, 'No, I am not here to tell you what you ought to think, but to help you to think for yourselves.' That has been my attitude all my life.

And yet, perhaps all the more on this account, I have had my scruples as a teacher. I have not thought it right to endeavour to commend my private views or to seek to gain proselytes for them. And, as a matter of

fact, I think I may say that I have carefully abstained from doing so. It has happened that I could do this the more easily because I had taken as the continuous subject of my regular lectures the *Praeparatio Evangelica*; and in this subject none of the particular burning questions were raised.

So, within the range of my work as professor, there may be said to have been (as it were) oil upon the waters. The field of controversy has been outside. Here I did not impose upon myself any such self-denying ordinance, but I have taken my chances in the *mêlée* just as they came.

There have been one or two crises, or what I thought were crises, in the Church during the last few years; and, rightly or wrongly, I have felt a call to intervene.

I

I cannot honestly deny the charge if it is said that the opinions which I entertain are extreme. But I should like to explain—indeed I think it my duty to explain—just in what sense and to what extent I acknowledge its truth.

I know that I have no tendency to extremes in the matter of *temperament*. The old Greek motto μηδὲν ἄγαν, 'Moderation in all things,' has great attractions for me.

It is not here that the extremes come in. The region where they do come in is purely intellectual. I believe that opinion ought to be logical, that in the end it will

be logical, and that of two opinions that which is most logical is sure to prevail. Of course I mean by this opinions of a certain kind. I exclude altogether those which turn upon the question of expediency. I am only concerned with those to which we must in the last resort apply the epithets 'true' and 'false'. But as the debated points with which we have to deal are of this kind, I lay down the rule without qualification.

When I say that opinion should be logical, I mean that it should be consistent or all of a piece. It will not do to let what is practically the same process of reasoning lead to one conclusion one day and to quite a different conclusion the next. Certain positions are tenable and certain other positions are not tenable. You cannot halt in the middle of No-man's land. You are bound to go on. You must always be able to show cause, not only why you go so far as you do, but also why you stop precisely where you do.

This is a law of the thinking process. In regard to it the thinker's responsibility is really at a minimum. He cannot help himself. His action is almost impersonal. But it is apt to seem extreme.

II

And yet I have this reason for not regarding conclusions reached in this way as extreme. The logic does not always lie upon the surface but beneath the surface. I should put it that, where the old and the new opinions are bound and clamped together by such

ties, they are virtually the same. The difference between them is not a difference of essence. Rather they agree in essence; it is only in accident that they differ.[1]

This is what I mean when I speak of the difference of times. I look upon it that the Christian ages succeed each other; that each age has its own context or body of thought; that the transmitted doctrines which come down to it must be adapted and adjusted to this body of thought; and that by the process they do not lose their own identity.

There is in them an element which may be described as *mutatis mutandis*. But the element which is strictly continuous and the same is very considerable indeed.

Christianity is a great spiritual system. That spiritual system remains constant. Our object is two-fold, partly an object of belief and partly of life. We desire to think of God as Christ thought of Him, and as St. Paul and St. John thought of Him. And we desire also to remain in the same personal relation to God and Christ in which the apostles and the apostolic writers stood to Them. That should be—and I submit that it is—a sufficient bond of identity and union.

III

Now I must ask you to forgive me, and not think it unduly egotistical, if I follow the example of St. Paul

[1] Again I would ask to compare a poem of Browning's—'Development'.

by 'transferring in a figure to myself' (μεταχηματίζω εἰς ἐμαυτόν) what I have to say on the general subject. It is not that I think this personal aspect of it important, but that the shortest, the quickest, and the most direct way of dealing with the subject is to have before our minds a concrete example; and the concrete example about which I know most is naturally myself. It may save a good deal of circumlocution if I may be allowed to use the first person singular rather freely.

From this point of view, the question that it will be best worth our while to discuss is the question of Miracle. Other questions are involved—more particularly that of credal obligation. But this, and I think I may say all the other subordinate questions that are raised round it, come in as parts of an argument in reference to Miracle.

It has been rather indirectly than directly that in recent years this question of Miracle has come to have so much prominence for me. I began my career as a theologian by deliberately putting it aside. I decided that my best course was to hold it in suspense.

The natural method for me to employ is inductive. I said to myself, when I began to work at theology, that I must begin at the beginning—I must know where I am. I must begin with the literature. I must put myself to school both in the lower criticism and in the higher. I must try to learn what are the right texts. I must try to put these texts into their right environment. I must consider questions of authorship, of genuineness and the like.

This is what I did to the best of my ability. Other people may have done it, or would have done it, better. But I did what I could according to my lights.

The sort of general conclusion at which I arrived might be called conservative or liberal-conservative. Then the theological world was pleased with me, and it still reminds me of those better days. I have not swung round so much as it supposes, though I have to some extent swung round.

I'm afraid there is one important point on which I was probably wrong—the Fourth Gospel. The problem is very complex and difficult; and I have such a love of simplicity that I expect my tendency was to simplify too much, and to try too much to reach a solution on the ground of common sense. Perhaps I should say in passing that the contribution to this subject which has made the greatest impression upon me in recent years has been the article by Baron Friedrich von Hügel in the eleventh edition of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. The turning-point in my own mind was when I began to take in more directly than I had hitherto done this question of Miracle.

The landmarks of my life have been landmarks in a process of self-education. The results lie on the table, and they are what they are. If you think that there ought to be more to show, I quite agree. But the defect is radical. I doubt very much whether I have had it in me to do much more than I have. I am really a slow worker; what I have written at all rapidly has almost always been written more or less at

heat. The process of incubation has usually been a long one. I have not—I know that I have not—a capacious brain. When I know what I want to say, it often costs me a considerable effort to say it. I have spent more time than most men over rough copies. If the world cared to estimate what it owed to me, a large part would consist in what it has been spared. A great deal of bad work of mine has never seen the light.

There are just two things that I can say for myself. My work, such as it is, has always taken precedence of everything else. And I have not been sparing of self-criticism. I have aimed at simplicity and clearness; and I have not been satisfied until I had attained something of those qualities.

IV

I said that I began by taking up a neutral position on the subject of Miracle. The period during which I maintained this lasted till the end of 1912. It might be said to fall roughly into two halves. The first half had for its landmark the publication of my article on the 'Life of our Lord' in vol. ii of Hastings's *Dictionary of the Bible*. This was in 1899. A little collection of documents covering the period is contained in the second and later editions of the reprint of this article, under the title *Outlines of the Life of Christ*, from 1906 onwards. In this there were added two surveys of the general position as I seemed to see it in 1903 and

1905. What I may call the second half of the period also had its two landmarks at the beginning and at the end. The first may be seen in the chapter on 'Miracles', originally a sermon preached before the University, in my book called *The Life of Christ in Recent Research*, which was published in 1907, the second in a paper read at the Church Congress at Middlesbrough in 1912. This period is my real transition. By this time my mind was actively at work on the subject of Miracles; it was in movement all along, and was in process of coming to a decision.

This is the record by which I would ask to be judged in the past, down to the end of 1912. And for the rest, I would ask to be judged by what I am saying to-day.

V

However, the main issue for which I have to answer is the decision come to at the end of 1912 and the change to which I have committed myself since that date.

It has been a question how I should best do this. I think I may do it in the clearest and most concise form, if I can succeed in stating certain axioms or general principles which I believe to have played the determining part in the decision to which I came.

I shall probably do well to break up this section of my treatment into two parts, the first dealing with general considerations, the second with the particular

process which has led me to my conclusions. I shall be obliged to anticipate a little the results of Part II in Part I. But if you will grant me your indulgence so far as this, I shall hope to show that your indulgence has been justified.

VI. A

(1) I would express the first more general principle thus: *Poetry comes before prose; the earlier statements are usually more or less coloured by the imagination; what we call 'the plain fact, neither more nor less,' is usually latest in order of time.* I have to say 'usually' because the rule is not quite without exceptions. What it amounts to is that the aim at exactness of statement is a scientific aim and belongs to the scientific period, which is latest in the world's history. Sometimes, however, a similar result is obtained through simplicity and directness of object and the absence of distorting influences. In this way portions of ancient narrative, like the story of Abimelech in Judges ix, or the story of the rebellion of Absalom in 2 Samuel, attain to great perfection. But the general rule holds good, especially where there is a substantial interval of time between events and their committal to writing, that the narrative bears marks of considerable play of imagination; it is anything but a direct reflection of the original occurrence.

It is a paradox of Divine Providence that so much early history, whether secular or sacred, should be of

this character. But the fact cannot be doubted; and it must be taken as it is.

(2) Our next axiom is *that the true divine is not to be sought in the abnormal, though for long ages the tendency has been to think that it was.* It was natural to suppose that command over nature was indicated by going counter to nature. But the end of this assumption really came with the Baconian aphorism: *Natura non nisi parendo vincitur*, the laws of nature must be followed before they can be overcome. This is no doubt from the human point of view. But it is no less true in fact from the Divine point of view, although it will be in slightly different formulation. From the Divine point of view it will mean that God is consistent with Himself; that He respects His own laws; that they describe His permanent mode of action.

It is no merely mechanical uniformity that I contend for. Those of my critics who have sought to saddle me with this have missed my real intention. I am quite aware that in the advance of science the leading conceptions of one age are not those of another. In the period at the head of which stood Newton the dominant science was Physics and the ruling conception was embodied in the laws of matter and motion. In the period at the head of which stands Darwin the dominant science is Biology and the typical conception is that of life and growth. The idea of law becomes subtler and more elusive; but it remains law all the same.

(3) Our third axiom is the counterpart of this last:

viz. that *the true divine is really spiritual*; it is seen in the presence of higher powers of the Spirit. The best representation we can have of a period dominated by this principle is the picture drawn for us of the Apostolic Age. And still better than the external description of that age in the Acts of the Apostles is the internal presentation of its actual working given us in the body of the Apostolic Epistles. We can see there on an ample scale and at a high degree of intensity the free activities of the Holy Spirit, without being compelled to describe them in terms that imply anything really abnormal.

(4) Putting together the effect of these three principles, the practical result will be, not that we are called upon to discard the conception of Miracle, but that it is desirable to amend the conception, and to do this by correcting the definition of Miracle.

It is quite true that in common parlance and in popular usage the word 'miracle' is often used in such a sense as to imply real contradiction or violation of the accustomed order of nature. But this is no necessary part of the meaning of the word; neither is it a necessary presupposition of the history that has come down to us.

I would ask you to consider whether it is not possible to keep the idea of Miracle, but to eliminate from it the element of the 'abnormal'. I fully believe that there were miracles in the age of the Gospels and Acts, in the sense of 'wonderful works' or 'mighty works'. But I do not think that they involve any real breach of the order of nature.

VI. B

I have added a paragraph, to complete the sense of what I had written. But this is really the point of which I spoke in my opening remarks where there occurred to me a modification of the way in which I was proposing to present my case. I am not sure that I need introduce it, or that it would be well for me to introduce it just yet. At the same time I am inclined to think that it might be a good thing if I were to suspend my argument at this point in order to make another correction, or fuller exposition, of the standpoint from which I am really speaking.

I spoke a moment ago about eliminating the abnormal. You may ask me how I would define the abnormal. I should be glad if I could rather shift the responsibility for defining it from myself and say that I meant by 'the abnormal' that which would be taken as such or under ordinary circumstances disallowed by, or would cause serious difficulty to, an open-minded well-instructed man of science. It is really the scientific spirit that I wish to represent. But I wish to do so without posing in a character to which I have no rightful claim. I would rather leave men of science to speak for themselves than attempt or profess to speak for them. I do not disclaim the name of Modernist. The name describes justly what I aim at being. I aim at thinking the thoughts and speaking the language of my own day, and yet at the same time keeping all that is essential in the religion of the past. I fully believe that it is possible

to do this. If I did not think so I should not be here.

That is my fundamental faith. But, before it can be made good, a certain amount of restatement is needed; and that is what I am trying to supply, or to help to supply. In the process I reached a certain stage at the end of 1912.

(1) At that time I underwent one of those experiences which so often mark the steps in a mental career. A number of threads seem suddenly to come together and unite in a definite conclusion. Summarily stated, that conclusion took the form of a growing consciousness that Miracles *could be explained.* More fully and more accurately, I should put it in the form that the abnormal element in miracle could be explained without being taken as literal fact.

In a case like this the suddenness seems to come from being able to survey a wide extent of ground in a process which has largely the effect of symbol or vision and yet which is capable of being analysed into its parts, and has to be so analysed if it is to be presented as proof or argument. A general principle running through the argument in this case was an estimate of the relation between the testimony and the things supposed to be attested. These fell into three classes according as they belonged (i) to secular history, (ii) to the Old Testament, (iii) to the New.

In each of these cases the process of analysis had been at work. Reitzenstein published his treatise *Hellenistische Wundererzählungen* in 1906; but it was

more as dealing with a sort of literary curiosity than as a serious inquiry into historical truth. In that respect he was arguing towards a foregone conclusion. No one was prepared to defend the stories of pagan miracle as literal history. The inquiry was purely academic; it had no bearing on practical affairs.

It was otherwise with the Old Testament. But by this time the Old Testament had been closely studied as a series of literary and historical documents. The place of these documents and their relation to the events was approximately fixed. Here no doubt there were many stories of wonders. But the more carefully these stories were examined, the less it was felt that they could be worked into deliberate history, constructed in accordance with modern standards. They presented an uneven surface. The documents that were fullest of marvels were remote in time from the events which they recorded. Those which were near in time to the events were more and more sober and unadorned. In the end it became clear that the Old Testament did not supply a single example that could establish the truth of an event really contrary to nature.

The strongest language on this head has been used by some of those who are most strenuous in asserting the literal exactness of details of New Testament history. Various attempts have been made to erect barriers between the one region and the other; in other words to show that the New Testament example stands, where the Old Testament example analogous to it, fails. I do not hesitate to say that not one of these

attempts has really succeeded. It is not so very difficult to show that the New Testament evidence in some particular case is appreciably better than that supplied by the Old Testament ; but it is never possible to show that it is so much better as to bear the weight thrown upon it.

(2) In regard to the Old Testament, I would state my argument in two steps. If I may, I will state them first and illustrate them afterwards.

(*a*) The Old Testament was the period during which the conception of Miracle with which we are concerned was formed. We have just seen that during this period a number of events came to be set down as specially divine and as proofs of divine action in the general sense, because they seemed to run counter to ordinary nature and therefore were held to show command and control over it. It was almost inevitable that this should be so. The men of that day did not possess the knowledge to determine what was really contrary to nature and what was not. Some things which seemed to them strange and (as it would now be said) 'supernormal' really came within the regular course of nature. But, in this way, through natural misunderstandings and through the natural process of growth between the occurrence of the events and the time at which they were committed to writing, a certain number of typical forms had arisen which had a sort of general recognition.

(*b*) As a result of this, in the New Testament period, in religious circles, men had got into the way of expecting miracles, expecting the abnormal. 'Except

ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe.' In this too our Lord was evidently aware of the tendencies of His time, and was on His guard against them. He uttered His warning; but the warning was not heeded. The tendency was at work which it expressed. Men thought that they were doing honour to deity. The wish fathered the thought. They read back into the events features which seemed to them appropriate. Unconsciously or half-consciously, they heightened the touches which appeared to them to be supernatural.

(*c*) I said that I would illustrate the process, and I will do so by three examples, all of which I think came home to me in the course of 1912.

The one that struck me most was a well-authenticated story told me by my doctor at Llandrindod in the summer of that year. It seemed to supply a close parallel to the story of Elisha, Naaman, and Gehazi. The modern incident was this. A patient, who was a good deal run down, went to consult his doctor. The doctor ordered him complete rest; he was to go away at once for six months. In a few hours he was back at the doctor's again. He had been obliged to wind up his business affairs in a hurry. He went to see his partner with this object; and the partner took the opportunity to break to him, what he had never suspected before, that he (the partner) had been behaving fraudulently for a long time, that the business was really bankrupt, and that he was a ruined man. The effect of the shock was, as I understood, that in his debilitated state of health he broke out into a sudden and violent attack of

eczema, or something of the kind. I suppose that an ancient, with his imperfect knowledge, might easily and naturally call this 'leprosy'.

The second example is just a guess of my own, with reference to the story of the floating axe-head in 2 Kings vi. 1–7, which I may be stating wrongly. There are doubtless many here who will be able to correct me if I am. Or rather, I can avoid this risk by simply quoting from the article on the 'Dead Sea' by Professor Lucien Gautier in *Encyclopaedia Biblica*, vol. i, who writes:

'Another feature of it is its great density, which arises from its salinity (the mean is 1.166). At a depth of 1,000 feet the solid matters contained in the water represent 27 per cent of the total weight. . . . A bath in the Dead Sea at once proves its difference in density from other seas or from fresh-water lakes. Eggs float on it. The human body being lighter than the water, swimming becomes difficult, the head alone of the swimmer tending to sink.'

These two examples are to illustrate the genesis of the belief in miracle or rather, more accurately, of the belief in a breach of the order of nature where really there was none.

The third example shall illustrate the relation of a New Testament narrative to an Old Testament parallel. I will quote this as it stands.

'And there came a man from Baalshalishah, and brought the man of God bread of the first-fruits, twenty loaves of barley, and fresh ears of corn in his sack. And he said, Give unto the people, that they may eat.

And his servant said, What, should I set this before an hundred men? But he said, Give the people, that they may eat; for thus saith the Lord, They shall eat, and shall leave thereof. So he set it before them, and they did eat, and left thereof, according to the word of the Lord.'[1]

I would not say that this suggested the story, but the form at present taken by the story, or double story, of the Feeding of the Multitude in the Gospels.

It has, I think, given rise to the suggestion, that the incident of the man of Baalshalishah is very inconspicuous in the place where it occurs and that it is not likely to have been in the minds of any of the Synoptists.

On the other hand I would urge that the scribes of our Lord's day knew their Bibles a good deal better than we do. What we think inconspicuous by no means escaped their notice. I also quite believe that the story of the Feeding had a real foundation in fact. I have suggested elsewhere that it arose out of a sacred meal, which I can well believe to have been an anticipation of the Eucharist. It is only the miraculous multiplication of the bread which I should regard as doubtful.

It will have been observed that all three examples are taken from the little group of narratives about the prophet Elisha. I would not say that they gave rise to these stories directly but indirectly. I mean, that what they helped to construct was, not the particular story, but the type of miracle which found expression in the particular story. I would not say that the narrator had seen an axe-head floating in the Jordan

[1] 2 Kings iv. 42–44.

near the Dead Sea, but that he knew that some one had seen a heavy body floating where it might not be expected to float; and in that way the type of miracle might have been created.

In like manner, some of the greater descriptions of the supernatural probably arose out of events of which a tradition lingered. For instance the description of the giving of the Law from Mount Sinai is clearly based upon an active volcano and earthquake. There are many extinct volcanoes in the near neighbourhood of Palestine. We have a similar picture of one in Psalm xxix. Again, the passing of the Red Sea and the passing of the Jordan may well have been started originally by the observation of actual facts.

I have mentioned one characteristic of the contemporaries of our Lord—that they were close but rather mechanical students of their Bible. Another is that they were not accustomed to discriminate between moral or spiritual and material. They were accustomed to interpret events in as realistic and palpable a sense as possible. They very often could only conceive of them in this way; and, where an Old Testament parallel presented itself, they were sure to do so. It was for this reason that they thought of our Lord's Ascension as a scene of literal levitation. They conceived of it after the manner of the taking up of Enoch and Elijah.

In the third place, it was only natural that they should be drawn especially towards the beginning and the end of our Lord's life on earth. And I cannot be

surprised that in these connexions there should have grown up a belief in the Virgin Birth and in a literal bodily resuscitation.

I have cut myself off by taking up so much of your time from the possibility of saying more about these subjects at present. It may be that, if I am granted the status and privileges of an Emeritus Professor, I may be able to say more some time in the future. For to-day I will only set down the rather sweeping generalization by which I was inclined to explain to myself the instances of miracle which seemed to involve real violation of the order of nature. I do not think that these instances are strictly historical. At the same time I *do* think that belief in them was encouraged by the fact that other miracles were strictly historical. A personality like that of our Lord, or in a lesser degree like those of St. Paul or St. Barnabas or St. Peter or St. John, worked miracles naturally and spontaneously. A conspicuous case would be that of those poor creatures who were thought to be possessed with demons. That calm, serene, penetrating yet sympathetic eye, fixed upon the troubled and agitated patient, brought healing with it. That is one example, and there were doubtless many more. But in the cases which we are compelled to reject, as at least not probable in the form in which they are recorded, I should be inclined to seek a solution under the general heading that the element of the abnormal came in, not so much in the facts as *in the telling*.

VII

I have explained the course by which I have been led to the conclusions which I have adopted in regard to Miracle. But the time has come for me to explain further the extent to which I am prepared to modify those conclusions. I am quite prepared to think that I have stated my case too absolutely. We too are limited by the age we live in. With us too the reconstruction is an act of faith and not of knowledge. I do not doubt that I have too often said 'It is' where I should have said 'It may be'. There are what Browning called 'the outward shows of the world'. But we want to get through these at the spiritual meaning; and any expression at which we may arrive for this must always be approximate. The present-day equivalent of New Testament language—the element of *mutatis mutandis* as compared with our own time—cannot be something hard and fast. It must not be either too precise or too vague. It must not be too precise, because it is always moving; it is always adjusting itself as it goes on. It must not be too vague, because it must always keep up its continuity and identity.

There is in this a principle of 'live and let live'. The mistake that has been made in the past has been the attempt to define too closely the outward material picture, which is the husk or embodiment of truth and which must tend towards exaggeration or rigidity on the material side. It is better so perhaps than it would be to lose outline altogether; and that is the justification

of the continued use of the ancient creeds, that they give us substance and keep us from wandering. The corrective against pressing this too far is to remind ourselves that in the last resort it is conditioned by relativity and has in it something, which may be more and may be less, of the nature of symbol.

VIII

Now let me ask you: Does not this line of argument which I have been following point to a great reconciliation, a real reconciliation, a more complete and searching reconciliation than has ever been before between science and religion? Must it not be immensely easier than it ever has been for the man of science to believe with all his heart and soul in Christianity? Is not the last obstacle removed—if we can go to him and say to him, 'I do not ask you to accept anything really abnormal. We may take the world as it is. We may believe that it has been in the past as it is now in the present, and yet we may at the same time believe in this great spiritual system of Christianity. We may adopt as permanent and final the language that the Gospel according to the Hebrews used about our Lord: *descendit fons omnis Spiritus Sancti et requieuit super eum*'?

Why should we not endorse this? We may surely take it as compatible with a full and true Humanity. We know that there have been prophets and holy men in the past in whom there have been implanted what the ancients called 'seeds or germs of the Divine

Word'. May we not also believe that there was One in whom the fullness of that Word dwelt bodily?

IX

That is really the end of my lecture. But, on this last occasion, I cannot resist the temptation to add what I may call two appendices, partly for my own satisfaction, to see if you are at all inclined to go with me in thinking that what I am going to put before you is really so important as it seems to me to be; and partly for the subordinate purpose of illustrating my belief in what I have called the logic of opinion.

In spite of Bolshevism and all the kindred phenomena all over the world, still I would make bold to say that Atheism and Agnosticism are dead or doomed to die. The decisive argument has gone against them, and it is only a question of time when and how it works itself out.

I can perhaps state my case best as taking up those magnificent opening words of Bacon's *Essay on Atheism*:

'I had rather beleeve all the Fables in the *Legend*, and the *Talmud*, and the *Alcoran*, then that this universall Frame, is without a Minde. And therefore, God never wrought Miracle, to convince *Atheisme*, because his Ordinary Works convince it. It is true, that a little Philosophy inclineth Mans Minde to *Atheisme*; But depth in Philosophy, bringeth Mens Mindes about to *Religion*: For while the Minde of Man, looketh upon Second Causes Scattered, it may sometimes rest in them, and goe no further: But

when it beholdeth, the Chaine of them, Confederate and Linked together, it must needs flie to Providence, and Deitie.'

There was a critical moment in history, after the publication of the *Origin of Species*, when people were beginning to draw their inferences as to the larger bearings of the problem. It seemed for the time as though final causes were banished. The proof seemed to have broken down that 'this universal frame is [not] without a Mind'. But are final causes really banished? Is there no purpose in the universe?

Surely we ought to know by this time whether there is or not. It should be a simple issue. For, you will please remember that the question is, *not* whether there is any particular purpose in the universe but whether there is any purpose in it at all. We can see what it has grown from, and what it has grown to. In my first lecture I emphasized the fact that at the present time the history of religion can be written in considerable detail for some five thousand years. Is not that long enough to tell whether there is any purpose at work in the universe or not? Indeed I should have thought that we could go beyond the simple affirmation and say, not only that there is a purpose in the universe but that there is a *religious* purpose in it. The universe in any case is One; and in any case, when we take out this five-thousand years section, it is found to be instinct with purpose, closely articulated and concatenated, graduated upwards in an almost infinite series of degrees, following each other in

what is upon the whole an orderly sequence; and, as is the way in evolution, pioneers have been thrown out to show in which direction the movement is tending. On the evidence before us, can we have any further doubt that the process as a whole has Mind and intention behind it? In other words, is it too much to say that Atheism—reasoned Atheism—is dead?

X

Perhaps the other point is only a subdivision of the last. But things are now on so vast a scale that subdivisions too may be of no small importance. What was the most threatening feature in the tremendous war from which we have just emerged? Was it not the claim of a single European nation to be in effect a law to itself, the judge without appeal of its own interests and bent upon making those interests prevail? Did not that attitude strike at the very foundation of international morality? Did it not emphasize the fatal weakness that international law had no sanctions? Did it not involve in the relations of states the negation of all right but the right of the stronger?

It is from this anarchy that we have been saved. And in any case we have been saved from it. Because, whatever promise there may be in the League of Nations and other international engagements, we are not dependent on these alone. I imagine that the great safeguard is that it has become clear in fact as well as in theory that never again in the intercourse of nations can the offenders against right count upon

impunity. That is what they have done hitherto. It will be another thing when every miscreant knows that punishment, individual punishment, may sooner or later overtake him.

Despite all the complexities and all the perplexities that are taxing our statesmen, the most serious gaps in our international system are being removed. And it seems impossible that the future should not see a great step in advance.

IV

THE MEANING OF THE ATONEMENT

IV

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'I delivered unto you first of all that which also I received how that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures.'—1 CORINTHIANS XV. 3.[1]

IN seeking to penetrate a little further into the idea of Atonement and of the Great Atonement as it is presented to us in the Bible, I think it may be well to start from a verse like this, which is a fixed point, a plain brief and definite statement of a fact not liable to any difference of interpretation. The First Epistle to the Corinthians was written in any case within a year or two of A.D. 54, or some five-and-twenty years after the Crucifixion. But the statement goes back some way earlier, in the first instance to the time when St. Paul first preached at Corinth—some four years before—and, behind that, to his first close intercourse with Christians soon after his conversion, which may have been less, and can hardly have been much more than five years after the Death of Christ. At that date he found a doctrine of Atonement commonly held and preached. So much is firm ground, a fixed landmark which cannot well be shaken. If we try to go back still further, we are left with a choice between two possibilities. Either the doctrine had arisen in that short space of about five

[1] A Sermon preached before the University of Oxford on February 16, 1919.

years, or else we must cross the border backwards until we are brought within the lifetime of our Lord Himself and suppose that it had originated in some hint which had fallen from Him.

It would take too long to give all the reasons—for they are many—which lead me to adopt this second alternative and to infer that the Early Church derived its belief in the atoning quality of the Death of Christ from Christ Himself, and that it had its roots in the consciousness that He was Himself called upon to play the part of the Suffering Servant of Jehovah described in the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah. There would seem to have been a triple strain in our Lord's consciousness of His Divine Mission, expressed in those three terms, the Son, the Messiah, the Servant of Jehovah. The consciousness that He was Himself called to play the part of the Servant of Jehovah comes to light first in the predictions of the Passion which are represented as beginning immediately after St. Peter's Confession at Caesarea Philippi. We might say perhaps that as our Lord's consciousness of Sonship received its seal in the vision which accompanied His Baptism, and as His consciousness of Messiahship found an echo in St. Peter's Confession, so also His consciousness of a call to assume the character of the Suffering Servant was confirmed by another vision, the vision that is known as the Transfiguration, when Moses and Elijah 'appeared in glory, and spake of his decease which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem'.[1]

[1] Luke ix. 31.

Now it is well known that there are two texts in the Synoptic Gospels—and I believe two only—which suggest that our Lord thought of His own Death as atoning. The second, of which I shall not say more at present, is contained in the words which embody the institution of the Eucharist at the Last Supper, 'This is my blood of the covenant which is shed for many'.[1] The other is the verse which appears identically in Mark x. 45, Matthew xx. 28, 'The Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.' I believe that this is one of the indications that our Lord had in His mind the thought of the Suffering Servant of Second Isaiah. You will not fail to observe that 'ministering' or 'serving' is the proper function of the Servant; and there are marked coincidences in the Greek of this passage with the Greek of Isaiah liii. 11, 12, which point to the same conclusion.

I

This at once sends us back to the original of that wonderful chapter and that wonderful group of prophecies relating to the Servant of Jehovah. Some difficulty has been caused by the apparent changes in the subject of the picture that is drawn for us. At one moment it is clearly and expressly Israel as a nation;[2] at another, it is not the nation as a whole but, as it would seem, the faithful few, the godly kernel of the

[1] Mark xiv. 24, Matt. xxvi. 28, cf. Luke xxii. 20 *v.l.*

[2] Isa. xli. 8, 9; xliv. 1, 2, 21; xlv. 4; xlviii. 20.

nation, as contrasted with the 'blind and deaf' who make up the main body (xlii. 18, 19); at a third, we are led to think rather of an individual leader or prophet (so perhaps especially in xlii. 1–3 and liii). Really the Servant is an ideal figure, which is capable of expansion or contraction, according to the particular object which the writer has specially before his mind. Sometimes he is thinking of an individual whose mission it is to convert or reconvert his own people; sometimes of a group who act together and suffer together in the same cause; and sometimes he generalizes yet more boldly and thinks of the whole nation in its ideal aspect as a missionary nation, which stands out as a witness for God among the peoples of the earth, a light to lighten the Gentiles. In this character it attains to the height of its mission especially through its sufferings. It is just as a broken, dispersed and exiled nation that it is able to do its work among the heathen most effectually.

The writer certainly has this larger view before his mind. And yet, in a case like this, the concrete precedes the abstract. I have little doubt that the prophet's thought starts from what he had seen on the smaller scale and with his own eyes. This, I think, comes out especially in the first verses of ch. xlii and in ch. liii. The traits of character in these passages are so distinct that they read like the biography of an individual. The picture is indeed in each case filled in with luxuriant poetry: the bruised reed and the smoking flax; the tender plant out of a dry ground; the lamb that is led to the slaughter, and the sheep

that before her shearers is dumb. Metaphors like these add touches of beauty. But the human interest is predominant all through. The Servant will 'not cry, nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the street'. 'He was despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.' 'He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.' However much we may feel that this is applicable to Israel as a people; however much we may think of the nation acting as a scapegoat for other nations—that could be only by an effort of thought, starting from more immediate observation and experience. I imagine that the prophet must have seen some one close at hand whose life-history could be described in these terms. He ends by sacrificing life itself, and there would seem to have been special circumstances in his death. In some conspicuous way it was clear that he was dying for others, and he died unresisting and uncomplaining. At the same time he was mixed up with common malefactors, and made his grave among them. Yet he did not die in vain. He left some converts behind him, and a prospect of more. 'He shall see his seed'—his spiritual children; 'he shall prolong his days'—through this spiritual posterity; 'and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand'—he will feel that he is an instrument for carrying out God's purposes. In that he has his reward; he sees of the travail of his soul, and is satisfied. If he perishes, he perishes that others may live.

I must needs think that in this picture a corner is lifted of the curtain of darkness which hangs over the Babylonian Captivity. We know so little about the circumstances of that Captivity that it is difficult for us to fill in details by any process of conjecture. It is easier to understand how events on a small scale might reflect the course of history on a larger scale. The life-story of an individual might well be a kind of epitome of the history of nations. Among the nations too the same sort of tragedy was being enacted; and Israel was the hero of the tragedy. It loses its national independence. It is broken up and carried away captive. It is despised and rejected among the heathen. It is trodden down and trampled under foot of men. And yet, in the moment of its deepest humiliation, when it seems to be breathing its very last breath—in that very moment it is winning its greatest triumph; it is dying that others may live, and with such a life as they had never lived before.

We know more about the internal condition of the Roman Empire than we do about the Babylonian. And if we wanted to translate the poetry of Second Isaiah into plain prose, we should not be very far from the mark if we were to adapt it to a description of the missionary labours of St. Paul.

'Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day have I been in the deep.'[1]

[1] 2 Cor. x. 24, 25

St. Paul might have sat for the portrait of the Suffering Servant. His poor body must have been battered and scarred. We might well believe that of him too it was true in literal fact that 'his visage was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men'. With good right did he say that he bore about on his person the branding marks of the Lord Jesus.[1]

II

It is comparatively easy to illustrate the idea of the Suffering Servant from the career of St. Paul. The parallel would be even more complete with One who was greater even than St. Paul. That would be only what we should expect if there were truth in the view which I have already expressed that our Lord had deliberately taken to Himself the prophecy of the Suffering Servant and deliberately modelled the latter part of His own life on earth upon it. It is another question what place the idea of Atonement holds in the teaching of St. Paul. His contribution to the idea is very individual—perhaps the most individual contribution of all. It bears the stamp of a single mind, trained under peculiar conditions. We are never allowed to forget that St. Paul had been brought up at the feet of Gamaliel. We are not allowed to forget that he was 'of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee.'[2]

[1] Gal. vi. 17. [2] Phil. iii. 5.

He had been brought up intensively in the most characteristic learning of his nation; and he had applied that learning with a very subtle, vigorous, and enterprising mind. St. Paul stands out in history as perhaps the most intense personality that ever lived. His mind is always active in the highest degree; and it works on lines to which he was accustomed, to which he seems to have been almost born, and which had been strengthened in him by education. And then, with the processes of reasoning thus determined, he fuses the result of his own personal experience—an experience rich, deep, and varied as we may well think had never before been the lot of any child of man. The personality and the experience together mark his astonishing greatness; the training marks his limitations. We speak of 'limitations'; and such they really are. But we must always remember that they are the limitations of a very powerful mind.

The whole St. Paul comes out in the body of theory which includes his doctrine of Atonement. It is part of another doctrine which is peculiarly his—the doctrine that we call that of Justification by Faith. It is hardly what we can expect to be in the fullest sense an article in everybody's creed. And yet it is a very great intellectual creation. It is built up out of that primary element of personal experience working upon and through the specially Jewish method of interpreting and applying the Old Testament scriptures. In a sense perhaps the method is not so peculiarly Jewish. We are all apt to be caught by the great texts of the Jewish

Bible, and by one text at one time and another at another. Two such texts caught the attention of St. Paul. One was from the Book of Genesis, 'Abraham believed God—had faith in God—and it was counted unto him for righteousness'.[1] And the other was from the Prophecy of Habakkuk: 'The just—or righteous man—shall live by his faith.'[2] The word in the prophet does not quite mean what St. Paul made it mean: it meant 'fidelity' or 'faithfulness'; whereas St. Paul made it mean what he himself always understood by faith, 'the faith which made him a Christian'. Faith in both the Old Testament passages had a smaller meaning; but St. Paul filled it out to the utmost dimensions of his own rich and deep nature. It was that which brought him to Christ and that by which he had his hold on Christ, and through Christ on God. It was thus the bond of union between his human soul and the Divine. Now in both the two leading passages of which I have spoken 'righteousness' was associated with 'faith'. Hence St. Paul, after his conversion, feeling himself carried away by this new order, also felt himself brought into a right relation to Christ and to God. In other words, he was righteous in Their sight. Apart from his actual record, apart from his progress in his Christian calling, the way was made clear before him; the handwriting that was against him was blotted out;[3] his sins were forgiven. If we ask how this state of things had been brought about, the answer is, because a great Divine act has intervened.

[1] Gen. xv. 6. [2] Hab. ii. 4. [3] Col. ii. 14.

'Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: whom God set forth to be a propitiation, through faith, by his blood, to shew his righteousness, . . . that he might himself be just, and the justifier of him that hath faith in Jesus.'[1]

'Redemption', 'propitiation', 'by his blood': it is the language of sacrifice. As a rule St. Paul is sparing in the use of this language, which is more characteristic of the Epistle to the Hebrews. To that Epistle I now turn.

III

But before I do so, I have a debt to discharge. I should explain that, through the kindness of Dr. Rashdall, I have had the privilege of seeing proofs of the earlier part of his forthcoming volume of *Bampton Lectures*. To me they seem to show a very special power of statement, which I think reaches its height in the treatment of the Epistle to the Hebrews which is the point now before us. The section is worked out with considerable fullness, and when the book comes out should be read and studied as a whole. If I may be allowed to quote two paragraphs, they will not indeed do justice to the original, but I believe that they will give a clearer and more adequate impression than I could myself do at greater length.

Let us first take the following as a broad external presentation of the main teaching of the Epistle in contrast to the method of St. Paul. Perhaps the opening words need to be qualified in view of the important passage just referred to.

[1] Rom. iii. 24–26.

'The old sacrificial system never appears to have had much interest for St. Paul, though of course it was accepted as part of the law: in the Hebrews we hear little of the law except on its ritual and sacrificial side. And the writer exhibits this sacrificial system as orginally intended to be merely a transitory and visible type of the new and only effectual mode of reconciliation with God which Christianity provided. To carry out this purpose he had to represent the death of Christ as the true sacrifice which would secure the remission of sins, symbolized, but not really secured, by the ritual sacrifices of the old law. The old ritual, as he says, was a "parable referring to the time now present". To develop the parallel, to emphasize the contrast, to show the infinite superiority of the one true sacrifice which Christianity provided, he fairly revels in sacrificial language; he makes the most of every detailed point both of outward similarity and of inward difference which he could discover between the old ritual and the one true sacrifice to which it pointed. As the sacrificial victims were slain without the camp, so Jesus suffered without the gate of Jerusalem. As the High-priest entered the holy of holies with blood not his own, so the great High-priest entered into heaven by the sacrifice of Himself. As the first covenant was not dedicated without blood, so the new covenant required the shedding of the Messiah's blood. And so on.'[1]

And now let us turn to another paragraph which enters still more intimately into the mind of the writer and presents a yet finer characterization of it from the point of view of religious psychology.

'It is difficult in reading this Epistle to say exactly where metaphor or symbol ends and spiritual reality

[1] Op. cit., p. 154.

begins. It represents a stage in the development of thought in which types, symbols, visible embodiments of invisible and spiritual realities, parallelisms between the past and the present, were things of no small importance. We may even say that there is a tendency almost to identify or to confuse the symbol with the thing symbolized. And that is because the symbol was often to him more than a symbol. The writer was full of the idea of mysterious spiritual influences exercised through the medium of visible things. Doubtless he believed in a mysterious necessity for the death of Christ which went beyond anything which he could articulately express.' [1]

At this point the argument takes a turn that is less directly to my purpose. But I think I shall have quoted enough to show the keen and subtle insight brought to bear on the inquiry. And in the section as a whole there is much more of the same quality, to which I would invite special attention when the volume appears.

With this valuable help from without, I have done what I could to convey the idea of these three distinct groups of New Testament teaching. And now I must try rapidly to draw the threads together in an attempt to apply what has been said to our own attitude of thought and feeling at the present day. It is much in my mind that the difficulties which beset this question of the Atonement are largely due to the prevalence of what I suspect is a mistaken method of approaching the greater problems of Theology in general. I cannot help thinking that our method of theological study in

[1] Ibid, p. 159 f.

the past has been too predominantly dogmatic. We are still haunted by the old belief in the infallibility of scripture and by the method of authority in teaching. We are still too apt to interpret the Bible as if it were a code of law, as if the object to be sought were always of the nature of a legal definition—This thou shalt say, or This thou shalt do, and That thou shalt not do. This is what I call the dogmatic way of looking at things, which I venture to suggest is wrong. And then there is the further misfortune that, if we apply that method to the positive construction of our beliefs, it is only natural that we should apply the same method to the criticism of them: our constant attitude is one of affirming or denying, acceptance or rejection. This is what I venture to describe as a misfortune.

Should we not be more ready to take what we find as we find it? Should we not be content simply to dwell upon it—to follow naturally and without too much of criticism the processes of thought to which it gives expression?

That is just what we have been doing with reference to the idea of Atonement. We have studied it, in a brief and summary way, as it is embodied in the idea of the Servant of Jehovah, as it enters into St. Paul's doctrine of Justification by Faith, as it is worked up in the sacrificial teaching of the Epistle to the Hebrews. And now, let us ask ourselves what there is of deep reality in each of these three modes of conceiving of it.

(1) The figure of the Servant of Jehovah embodies the idea of vicarious suffering; and some people shrink

even from that. Why, the world is full of it; and not only is the world full of it but it is one of the most precious things that the world contains. It might be said that there are two kinds of vicarious suffering, the heroic and the unheroic. We are impressed by the former, and we are not much impressed by the latter—just because it is so common, and a great deal of it never comes to light, or at least is not noticed if it does. But let us think a moment. The son or the daughter—more often I suppose the daughter—devoting and sacrificing his or her life to an exacting parent. Or, it may quite well be the other way on, an affectionate and unselfish parent, devoting his life or her life to an exacting child—are not such things as these all round us? And are they not all the more precious because they are not noticed, because they are so often uncomplaining, and because the very sacrifice is often even quite unconscious?

And then there is the heroic kind. Surely the War has thrown a vivid light upon this. It is for such deeds that the Victoria Cross is given. We think of the Victoria Cross as the highest distinction that can be conferred or won. But there is one yet higher: at least the posthumous V.C. is a step higher than even the simple V.C., because the sacrifice has been of life itself. These deeds have not escaped notice; and to a certain extent they have had their reward, because we—the nation—pursue both the deed and the doer beyond the grave with undying and unbounded love and gratitude and reverence and admiration. That

holds good of those who are known; and how many hundreds and thousands and even tens of thousands there must be who are not known—where the intention has been there all the same, and has only not come to the act, or not been observed, or lost in the crowd and forgotten.

Surely all this is reality. It is implanted deep in the nature of things. It is not only reality but it is the very best of reality. It stands high in the scale of values—of ultimate and objective values—as they are in themselves and in the sight of God.

(2) And then there is another kind of reality. Take the institution of Sacrifice in the earlier stages of the world's history. How widespread it was; how almost universal. How instinctive it seems to have been as an expression of worship. Like so many of these primitive institutions, we may well believe that those by whom it was first invented would have been quite unable to explain what they meant by it; and yet it was full of meaning—and that right meaning, instinctively right and praiseworthy intention. That large-hearted prophet who is known to us as Malachi takes a wide survey of the world of his day and sees it everywhere prevailing, and everywhere acceptable and accepted by God.

'From the rising of the sun even unto the going down of the same my name is great among the Gentiles; and in every place incense is offered unto my name, and a pure offering: for my name is great among the Gentiles, saith the Lord of hosts.' [1]

[1] Mal. i. 11.

We may be sure that many an untutored heathen (as we call him) has stood at the altar with feelings at his heart in their essence very like our own.

No doubt the rite of sacrifice was capable of being corrupted. It was adjusted to an imperfect and progressive state of things. In its earliest forms it was very often crude. But it was on so vast a scale that we must needs think of it as God's appointment. It is part of the great scheme of things which begins in mystery and runs up into mystery. And from that time to this the idea and the practice have gone on being gradually refined and purified and adapted to higher and higher modes of living. They survive even to the present day.

If we take the idea of sacrifice as a whole, it includes, in greater or less degree, all the features to which exception is taken: it includes vicariousness; it includes propitiation; it includes even expiation. But there is no harm in these ideas if we did not read it into them. Why do we so often put unworthy senses upon things, when we might put worthy senses upon them?

I have already spoken of vicariousness. But, what of propitiation? What is there wrong in seeking for the Divine favour? The Hebrews had a beautiful phrase: they spoke of 'making the face to shine', and even of God making His own face to shine. What they meant was to bring over the face a smile of tenderness and love.

There is doubtless truth in the 'gift-theory' of sacrifice: but why should there not be? We spoil it by

imputing interested motives. But that is just our cynicism, and nothing else. Take a child, with its Christmas presents. A great amount of childish thought, and a great amount of genuine affection often goes to the making of those trivial offerings. They are made with the hope of winning that smile of which I have spoken. It is just love responding to love. The smile perhaps is all that is given in return, and it is not given because of the value of the offering, but in response to the motive which lies behind the offering. It is just one touch of human feeling awakening another.

And in the same way with 'expiation'. After all that too is only emphasized and intensified sorrow for sin, expressing itself in act.

Broadly speaking, there are these two great realities, or fields of reality, which converge upon and culminate in the Person of our Lord Jesus Christ.

There has been something strangely perverse about the constructors of dogmatic systems. I will do them the justice to say that they have not been without excuse—especially upon the old method of using, or misusing, scripture. The Biblical writings, and in particular perhaps the writings of St. Paul, do contain hints that were capable of being developed and pressed in the way that they have been. But they were the wrong hints to make use of, and they were used in the wrong way. They were taken out of their context and carried to logical extremes for which they were not intended.

Let me rather suggest, or commend, a different

method, which is in fact no other than that which we have been hitherto applying. We have (so to speak) spread before us a wide expanse of Biblical teaching. It is indeed only part of the whole; and yet even so how rich and varied it is! Whatever we have made it, the thought when it was first written down was living thought, and the development was natural development. Let us let our minds play over this. We shall spontaneously and instinctively assimilate what we find we can assimilate, some points more and some points less. Those on which we find that we can dwell most freely will stand out as so many centres or *foci* of reality from which our thoughts will shade away outwards and downwards. And much that we cannot perhaps assimilate directly we shall assimilate to some extent indirectly, by entering with sympathetic interest into the processes of thought by which they were originally formed. In this way there will be over the whole surface a certain play as of light and shade.

And the total effect will be a sort of sustained attitude and act of worship which will blend with the great *Benedicite omnia opera*, that immemorial and infinite chorus of praise which has been going on and rising up to heaven ever since the world began.

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